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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8117
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE 0656
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE IMMEDIATE 2395
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN IMMEDIATE 8668
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES IMMEDIATE 2561

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DEPT FOR NEA/PI, NEA/ELA, AND DRL/NESCA

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SY](#) [EUN](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY ON SYRIA'S SHAM PRESIDENTIAL "REFERENDUM"

REF: STATE 71071

Classified By: Classified by David D. Pearce, Political Minister Counse
lor, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) PolMinCouns delivered reftel points to Luciano Pezzotti, Director of the MFA Office for Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories. PMC urged an Italian and/or EU statement addressing Syria's pending presidential referendum. He said the Syrian Government should not get another free pass on this sham process. Instead of resorting to theatrics, they would be better off instituting real reforms and releasing political prisoners. He noted the Department and Human Rights Watch had both spoken out on the issue and that we hoped the EU countries would too.

¶2. (C) Pezzotti acknowledged the points but said only that the EU had been, and would continue to be, very attentive to the human rights issue in Syria.

¶3. (C) On a related matter, Pezzotti said he and Cesare Ragaglini, the MFA Director General for the Middle East and Mediterranean, planned to travel to Damascus and Beirut starting May 29. He added that FM D'Alema was also considering dates for travel to Syria, but they had not been finalized and he was not interested in a mere photo opportunity.
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